



Commerce Committee
March 13, 2014 Public Hearing

Testimony in favor of bills Senate Bill 421 and House Bill 5517.

Good afternoon Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, Senator Frantz, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce seeks to foster growth and opportunity for veteran-owned businesses and veterans transitioning to the workforce.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of over 42,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, accounting for 8% of the state's GDP. Studies have shown that veterans operate successful businesses and are more likely to hire veterans. Over the past four years, the UConn Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities has invested \$1.2 Million into veteran-owned businesses, which has resulted in \$7 Million in gross revenues and workforce opportunities.

In Connecticut, the veteran unemployment rate is about 8% overall, however veteran unemployment for 18-24 year olds remains in double digits. These brave few support our nation's freedoms and offer unrelenting support in the state's time of need, yet return home to high unemployment, underemployment, and a restricted business market. Servicemembers, veterans, and their families need viable opportunities for a successful transition.

We support state legislation that lowers barriers to entry to business ownership, economic reintegration, workforce development, and transition to the civilian sector. Strengthening Connecticut's laws to support entrepreneurship and job creation is the best chance we have for growing our state's population and economy.

We support these bills and appreciate the committee's efforts to provide these opportunities for business owners. We urge the committee to seek out opportunities to include veterans in your business and workforce development strategies throughout the session, and we look forward to serving as a resource to the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony, and we are available to answer any questions.



Bills Supported by the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Business Development and Opportunity

SB-421 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN BIDDING PREFERENCES IN STATE AND MUNICIPAL CONTRACTING.

We support this legislation, as it focuses on job creation. Legislation that supports and encourages job growth provides more opportunities for veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce.

HB-5517 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF CONNECTICUT MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE NEEDS.

We support a study of manufacturing workforce needs, and urge the committee to recommend that at least one member on the study represents the veteran perspective. Having this perspective will offer a richer, more comprehensive study.

Understanding the manufacturing workforce needs will ensure veteran service organizations and veteran's affairs programs know what skills to develop in vocational training programs. Creating opportunities for veterans in the workforce is an important step to reducing the unemployed and homeless veteran population in Connecticut.